

ECUADOR TRAVEL INFORMATION

REQUISITES:

You are responsible for your passport (valid at minimum through April 2024), your trip insurance, your flights to Guayaquil and from Quito, your packing and tips. This trip is moderately active with some hiking/walking over rough terrain. You know best about your ability. Options of varied activities geared towards different activity levels will be offered frequently. Check the detailed daily itinerary for details on fitness levels for activities. Contact Trip Leader Beth Wiegandt (YourOutdoorClassroom@gmail.com) for questions about daily activities and recommended physical ability. This trip is not guaranteed to be 100% accessible for those with mobility needs/aids.

TRIP LEADERS:

Beth Wiegandt is the Your Outdoor Classroom Instructor for Camp Bethel. Beth has traveled extensively, including coordinating expeditions and wilderness trips. **Alex Bentley** is a co-founder of the organization Waska Amazonia. Alex is a Salem, Virginia native who has lived in Ecuador for the last four years. He specializes in the study of reptiles and amphibians but works in various other projects of conservation and environmental education. **Dione Fiallos** is a co-founder of the organization Waska Amazonia and a businesswoman from Mera, Ecuador. She works with indigenous groups and local women to develop sustainable alternatives to destructive land-use practices. Dione also leads spiritual practices including yoga, meditations, and ceremonies.

Questions: Contact Beth Wiegandt at YourOutdoorClassroom@gmail.com or 540-556-2594

Ecuador Travel Tips:

Visa and Passports: Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months after your return date (through April 2024). There is no additional charge for a visa to enter Ecuador as a US citizen.

Currency: Ecuador uses the US dollar, so that makes it easy. Travelers checks are recommended but need to be changed out at banks or hotels as needed. Small bills are appreciated. You may not be able to get change back for large bills. Bills should be new without tears or obvious wear. Damaged bills are not readily accepted in Ecuador. Artisans and shop owners expect you to barter and you will get a better bargain if you buy multiple items from the same place.

Safety: Ecuador on the whole is a very safe country to visit. Visitors should be alert and protect their valuables when around town and especially in crowded market places. Exploring on your own at night is something that you should ask your concierge or guides about, as it depends on your location. Always heed their advice about areas to be concerned for your safety.

Health:

We will be travelling through all of the regions in Ecuador. As such, it is recommended to have the following:

- measles-mumps-rubella (MMR)
- diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis
- varicella (chickenpox)
- polio
- tetanus
- Yellow Fever
- Hepatitis A
- Typhoid
- A Malaria preventative (please note that Chloroquine is ineffective in Ecuador)

You should consult with your doctor regarding what would work best for you. Malaria pills (Doxycycline) can be obtained in Quito as well (often for much cheaper than in the US), but you will need to procure that on your own once you have arrived.

Altitude can be a factor in some of the higher regions. This can make you lightheaded and tired more easily until you are acclimated. Also, alcohol can affect you more rapidly at high altitudes. It is best to allow yourself to acclimate slowly and stay hydrated to avoid ill effects at altitude. If you suspect that you may be susceptible to these effects, we suggest coming prepared with altitude sickness pills.

Water: Tap water can be untrustworthy in many places, but fortunately we will have access to bottled water everywhere we're traveling to. We will also have a couple of water filters. Bring a bottle that can be filled with filtered or treated water. Travel size UV caps can be economical, easy to use, and rechargeable. There are also good travel filters available if you wish to have your own. Drinking water at SKIS is collected from rain barrels and boiled. We've never had any sickness resulting from the water or food at SKIS.

Food: (see detailed itinerary for included meals)

In most of the towns/cities that we'll visit, there will be typical American food options (pizza, burgers, sandwiches, etc). However, the Ecuadorian cuisine is so tasty you may not want to deviate from it at all! Ecuadorian bread is to die for. Ceviche and other seafood is unbelievably good. We will visit markets that have food vendors who will noisily vie for your attention and serve you scrumptious potato pancakes and fresh juice made of fruits you've never heard of. If your stomach has proven reliable with street food in the developing world on past trips, you may feel comfortable sampling the various foods offered by street vendors. It is best to acclimate slowly when introducing yourself to street foods and especially drinks made with ice/unfiltered water to avoid digestive complications (using ice or drinking watered drinks can lead to a negative trip experience). If you're really feeling adventurous you may want to try "Cuy," a relished treat from the Andean highlands - Guinea Pig! We will also have access to supermarkets where we'll stock up on snack food. Don't worry, you will not be at a loss for culinary experiences and you will not go hungry!

For our 2 days at SKIS, three meals a day are provided. Food consists of typical Ecuadorian cuisine- soup, rice, eggs, salad, beans, plantains, fruit, chicken and beef, and occasionally fish. Mamita Gloria, the cook, is very accommodating of vegetarians and other dietary restrictions. A typical breakfast consists of eggs, rice, fruit, granola and/or bread. Lunch is almost always served with a delicious soup, accompanied by some combination of rice, corn, beans, yucca, potatoes, chicken/beef/pork/fish, sometimes eggs, plantains, other vegetables and more. You may have never been served popcorn with your soup before, you'll find that it's a killer combo. Dinner is often served with soup as well, and consists of some combination of the foods previously mentioned.

Language:

Spanish is the official language in Ecuador. We will have daily Spanish lessons that can help you with each day's activities. Your guide will be fluent in English as well and can help with translation.

Etiquette:

All Interactions start with good morning/evening/day. Then you can begin your business.

If you take a taxi, negotiate the price before you leave so there are no surprises in the price charged.

Businesses and taxi drivers expect you to haggle – don't feel bad about it!

Tipping for meals is not expected in Ecuador. Tips for guides and tour divers are appreciated.

Checks need to be requested when dining. Any wait staff can assist you with your needs, you don't have to wait for the person who first helped you.

Seat yourself – most establishments do not have a hostess.

Be polite. Learn greetings and other simple phrases and try out your Spanish. Folks will be glad to help if you try!

More details on etiquette will be covered during orientation!

Electronic devices:

Ecuador uses the same voltage and receptacles as the US. In most places, you will be able to charge items overnight at our accommodations.

Accommodations:

Everywhere except SKIS: Comfortable hotel accommodations throughout the trip have double occupancy rooms with 2 beds. The hotels are chosen for their comfort, and proximity to interesting flora and fauna or walking distance to city sites. All rooms have ensuite bathrooms. Some accommodations offer additional services such as spas. There are opportunities to make reservations if desired for extra services, although these are add on expenses. All accommodations have a restaurant with beer and wine available for purchase (including SKIS). There is limited availability for single occupancy rooms for the trip. Please inquire about availability and surcharge for this option.

2 nights in the Jungle: The accommodations in Sumak (SKIS) are as follows: All guests are housed on beds on the open 2nd floor of the main building. There is a variety of room configurations, but this is shared lodging. Linens, pillows and bug nets are provided, as well as shared flush toilets and showers (2) with hot water available. The main building at SKIS is a three story, open sided structure. The bottom level is used for dining, instructional courses, field training, processing field samples and general workspace. Private rooms are not an option for our 2 nights in the jungle.

Transportation:

Most of our journey will be in private buses or vans with a driver and guide accompanying us. There are a few short journeys where we will utilize open air buses (Chivas) that are great for sightseeing. The Chivas will be hired for our group for maximum flexibility.

Packing:

A suggested packing list is at the end of this document. A more detailed packing list will be shared after registration, including over the counter first aid items for international travel.

Trip Highlights:

- See the whale migration at Puerto Lopez
- Explore the rich diversity of the land and waters of Isla de la Plata
- Vanilla farms, coffee farms, llama farms!
- Explore the Ruta de las Cascadas (Waterfall Route) in Banos
- Swing out at the top of the world Casa del Arbol
- Learn about current research and conservation projects at the Sumak Kawsay in Situ (SKIS), a center for environmental education and research
- Visit the indigenous community of Guayusa Runa
- Learn about and tour coastal, jungle and highland ecosystems with their distinct flora and fauna
- Bathe in natural hot springs and heated mud baths
- Learn to make (and then get to eat) local foods
- Visit and explore 3 volcanos
- Visit Omaere Ethnobiological Park, Botanical Gardens, and National Parks
- UNESCO World Heritage site: Historic District in Quito
- Straddle the hemispheres in Quito

Itinerary Outline:

Day 1: Arrive Guayaquil and transfer to Puerto Lopez

Day 2: Machalilla National Park and the fish market of Puerto Lopez

Day 3: Explore the waters and beaches of Isla de la Plata including a whale watching tour

Day 4: Travel to Chimborazo Volcano

Day 5: Explore highland ecosystem and llama farming

Day 6: Travel to and explore Banos. Waterfall sightseeing and dinner at a popular waterfall

Day 7: Swing out over the world at Tungurahua volcano. Range of activity options from ziplining to exploring Banos

Day 8: Travel to Mera and explore the river trails. Visit the Waska Community and vanilla farm and the Butterfly Museum

Day 9: Travel to SKIS, a research facility in the Amazon Jungle. Many available workshops exploring the varied life in and around the facility.

Day 10: Learn to cook (and then eat) traditional food, learn about the current research, newly identified species, and stop at the river swimming hole.

Day 11: Travel to Puyo. Explore the riverfront and tour the Ethnobotanical Park, including a medicinal plants tour.

Day 12: Learn indigenous games, be transported on the river in a traditional canoe, participate in ceremonies and dances with the Guayusa Runa community.

Day 13: Visit the Biopark and riverfront district in Tena on our way to Quito. Stop for dinner and relaxation at the hot springs in Papallaca.

Day 14: Ride up the side of Pichincha volcano, explore the National Botanical Garden and the artisan market in Quito

Day 15: Explore the Historic District and the Basilica Cathedral with possible stops for a chocolate workshop and the Natural History Museum (depending on your return flight). Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

This trip is limited so register as soon as possible. Registration open until July 15.

Trip is brought to you by "Your Outdoor Classroom - Travel," a program of Camp Bethel (Fincastle, VA) led by Beth Wiegandt.

Base Cost:

\$3250 for double occupancy in hotels. (Limited single occupancy options for additional cost. Contact Beth Wiegandt.) Please see following for a list of what is included and exclusions in this price. \$800 deposit is due ASAP and no later than July 15 to reserve your space, of which \$300 is non-refundable **at any time** and the remaining \$500 is non-refundable after July 22. Your balance is due no later than August 20. All deposits and payments count toward your total fee. NOTE: \$300 of your initial deposit is non-refundable at any time, and the remaining \$500 is non-refundable after July 22. NO REFUNDS AFTER JULY 22. (Trip insurance is strongly recommended.)

Ecuador Amazon to Coast details; included in \$ fee:

- Beth Wiegandt is your general trip organizer and liaison who will accompany you once you arrive in Guayaquil on September 22 and through departures from Quito on October 6.
- Scientist and ecotourism guide from SKIS, Alex Bentley, accompanying the group for the entire trip. Alex has spent time in all of our sites and has a wealth of knowledge of the culture, flora, and fauna of Ecuador. He is enthusiastic to share this knowledge with us.
- Transfers to and from the airports in Ecuador.
- Hotel Accommodations double occupancy with private en suite bath in each city nearby to points of interest/shopping for exploration. Exception being SKIS where there are dorm accommodations in the Jungle.
- Luggage storage during our time at SKIS – luggage will await us in Puyo. Duffle bags will be provided for your necessary belongings while at SKIS.
- Travel tips and travel binder highlighting this trip.
- English Speaking City Guides and driver for tours in Ecuador.
- Luggage handling for all transfers.
- Private, comfortable transport for our group.
- All entrance fees and activity fees for listed sites/group activities on itinerary.
- All meals as listed in daily itinerary (14 breakfasts, 7 lunches, 11/12 dinners).

- Prior to your trip, Beth Wiegandt will provide guidance and tips for what is required for international travel to Ecuador.

NOT Included in your fee (exclusions):

- Flight to Guayaquil (arrive September 22 between 2 pm and 9 pm)
- Departing flight from Quito (after 2:00 pm October 6)
- Meals not specifically stated on the itinerary.
- Alcohol purchases with meals/other.
- Additional snacks, drinks, or incidentals
- Gratuity for drivers, and guides.
- Personal purchases.
- Trip Insurance and Medical Insurance for out of country (both highly recommended).

Your Assumption of Risk and Responsibilities:

- You must submit a completed, "Participant Authorization and Assumption of Risk Form" that states you have read this list, and are aware of the risks.
- If Camp Bethel cancels this trip, your deposit and Trip Fees will be fully refunded.
- You are responsible for all other costs not included in your Trip Fee (exclusions), and you are responsible for insuring against any other unforeseen cancellations, incidents, accidents, illness, or costs.
- You are responsible for securing travel insurance. Considerations: airline ticket cancellation refund; trip cancellation refund; airfare; baggage loss; accidents; emergency evacuation and rescue; plane crash; bus crash; theft/robbery; natural disasters; landslide; flooding; avalanche; political disturbance in the country; warfare; and other incidental travel costs.
- You are responsible for your personal health insurance during this trip. You should consider insuring for "worse-case-scenarios" of illness or injury, and you should know how your insurance would provide care in case of illness or injury while away from the United States. Considerations: injury; insect bites; rock fall; thunderstorm/lightning; "Traveler's Sickness;" individual health problem; illness or injury that requires an emergency service such as helicopter rescue and other means of transportation.
- When offered, activity choices are presented to appeal to a wide range of activity levels. Guides will ensure that descriptions are accurate, but you are responsible for choosing activities that match your physical capabilities while on the trip.
- It is your responsibility to have all proper immunizations and vaccinations, and to be physically and mentally ready prior to and during the trip. This includes consulting your physician, having a proper check up, and securing necessary medication.
- U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE BUREAU of CONSULAR AFFAIRS information for Ecuador is posted at: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Ecuador.html>
- Trip Leader Beth Wiegandt will work with our guides in Ecuador to minimize risks throughout the trip.

Questions: Contact Beth Wiegandt at YourOutdoorClassroom@gmail.com or 540-556-2594

RECOMMENDED PACKING LIST

A detailed packing list will be provided after registration, including over the counter first aid items for international travel.

Clothing

- Cold weather hat
- Sun hat/ball cap
- Bathing suit
- Short sleeve shirts (2-3 pairs)
- Non-cotton, long sleeve field shirts - light, breathable, and quick drying (1-2 pairs)
- Field pants that can get dirty - do not bring jeans for this purpose (1 pair)
- Shorts (1-2 pairs)

- Jeans or kakis
- Socks and underwear (5-6 pairs of each)
- A warm base layer
- Rain jacket
- Light-weight, disposable poncho
- Winter jacket
- Sneakers
- Sturdy walking shoes/hikers
- Shoes that can get wet (and stay on your feet)
- Rubber boots are essential for time spent in the jungle. **We will get your shoe size and provide these boots to you upon arrival. Therefore you do NOT need to bring boots.*

Other

- Headlamp (and extra batteries)
- Eco friendly soap (such as Dr. Bronner's)
- Field daypack
- Water bottle/bladder for 2+ liters
- Sun screen (REEF FRIENDLY PLEASE)
- Sun glasses
- Trekking poles that fit into checked baggage (not allowed into carry-on luggage)

Optional

- Pocket knife (in your checked luggage)
- Binoculars
- Camera
- Travel towel
- Mosquito repellent (mosquitos are not too bad at Sumak or Puyo, but you might consider bringing repellent if you are particularly sensitive to bug bites)
- Altitude sickness pills (Quito=10,000 ft elevation, we will be going up to around 13,000-14,000ft on Chimborazo)
- Motion sickness medication
- Journal (provided)